567 them for kola nuts with the Achanti [Ashanti] or for loaves of salt
439 at Timbuktu. Although they were always transported by roundabout routes to prevent them from finding their way back to their homes, still some of them always managed to escape.

492 The naba used the young yemdado as soroné or grooms, and
567 they would often [93] take the young and attractive women (yempoksé) as wives.

641 The sale of free men. Neither the emperor of the Mossi nor
681 his vassals sold their subjects. Individuals who were regarded as dangerous were simply put to death unless they took refuge in a bangaré to avoid being executed, as has been noted above. Some were sent to the emperor to be made into eunuchs.

304 The facial tattoos worn by the Mossi clearly distinguished them
567 from neighboring peoples. However, if by accident or because of
689 need a naba sold a free man and the latter was claimed by his relatives, the chief was required to buy back the slave or to indemnify his family. We have described above how a canton chief was exiled by the emperor for having sold free Mossi.

583 Concealed selling of women and children. In the chapter on
●562 marriage customs among the Mossi we shall show that a native
567 Moaga did not demand a bride price because he did not want to feel that he was selling his daughter. There is no doubt that this rule has exceptions. Indeed, we shall show that the failure to pay a debt, a bout of drunkenness, or a favor received might suffice to mortgage the future of a daughter, even though at the time she might be a small child and quite unaware of her fate. In any event, there would be no question of her expressing any opinion, since her wishes are never taken into account. During periods of famine -- which have been
[731] occurring almost [94] regularly for some years -- a small basket of millet is enough to make a father promise his daughter. In the same way, we regret to say, a great many girls are promised in exchange for trifling sums at the time the poll tax is paid.

567 Rights of slaves. Since he is regarded as an inferior being, the yemdaogo (slave) has no well-defined rights. He is required to perform all kinds of domestic work and must give unquestioning obedience to his master and the master's family. Besides his essential duties, however, he is permitted to do some farming for himself, practice some trade, or to raise cattle, with the proceeds constituting

567 Were slaves part of an estate? Among the Mossi, the wives
428 are part of an estate on the same footing as the rest of the property
562 of the deceased. The same thing applies to the captives (yemsé) and dogyiri (house slaves) who constitute and integral part of the estate. They constitute a patrimony to be handed down from father to son in accordance with the customary order of succession. They remain the exclusive property of the legitimate heir and are not distributed as are the wives of the deceased.

[97] Chapter 6

Djiba Naba, Crown Prince of the Mossi Empire

Preliminary Remarks

644 In writing on this subject we have not tried to ascertain whether the canton of Djiba was once independent or whether it was under the direct authority of the Mogho Naba.

At the outbreak of the World War in 1914 the Djiba Naba, a brother of the present emperor, Naba Kom, was drafted into the army, and another brother had to be appointed to take his place. The latter's administration was in many ways unsatisfactory, so when the Djiba Naba, on his return from the front, had to be sent to Doulougou to replace a deceased son of Naba Wobgo, the Mogho Naba retained direct authority over the canton of Djiba. Meanwhile, his eldest son had returned from Tunis and had been officially named the chief of Djiba, but he had had to leave again for military service at Salonika. Thus, it can be said that even before the canton of Djiba had been made the prerogative of the eldest son of Naba Zombré, it had already been under the latter's authority.

It was during the reign of Naba Zombré, twenty-third Mogho Naba, that the eldest son of the emperor was given jurisdiction over the canton of Djiba. Naba Zombré, after Naba Niandeffo, had one of the longest reigns in the history of the country. He actually ruled for sixty years.

643 [98] An old tradition requires an emperor who has ruled for
782 thirty years to go to Oubritenga to celebrate zom'bika (literally,

644 595 562 587 It should be said that the napagha, who is regarded as a piece of property, is part of the estate of a deceased chief. The new naba takes some of the old and young wives, and the rest are kept in the family of the nabissi. It is therefore not unusual to find women in the household of a naba who have been married to two or even three deceased chiefs. If they are not too old, they may give birth to children of the chief who is their second or third husband.

644 595 The establishment of a naba is often divided into three sections.

1. The zagkas sanga (the great house). All the old women, the unwanted ones, live here. Their mistress and guardian is the pugtiéma, who has charge of the house where the kimsé or manes of the ancestors live.

2. Zagbilin. The middle-aged women [163] who are still occasionally visited by their husband live here.

3. Dogoundba. This is the assemblage of several young and beautiful wives grouped around the favorite. They are called dogoundba, "guardians of the hut of the naba." These women receive all the favors, wear the finest ornaments, and are dressed in [291] godé (1). Most of the time the dogoundba live in one or several

1. A skirt that is highly valued among the Mossi.

huts, depending on their number.

Each of the women in the other two sections has her own hut.

Since the naba has too many wives to be able to look after all of them, they must provide their own clothing and food. Hence, they are forced to cultivate plots and sell some of their produce. Each napagha has her own small field of millet, peanuts, beans, and peas.

The dogoundba have a collective plot. They help their husband who not only has to feed them, but is also required to support [357] the sogoné and the samand'kamba (the latter are "people of the outer courtyard," another category of servitors who are sent on errands to the villages or who serve as grooms).

In the homes of the kombemba (plural of kombéré), it is the duty of the dogoundba to prepare food for the sogoné and for any

foreigners who are being housed by the naba. [164]

Each sogoné or samanbiga chooses a mother from among the wives of the naba (only those in the first two sections).

He helps her to cultivate her plot of ground and receives in return a little food over and above the ration of sagbo given to the sogoné as a group.

At Nanore (1), for example, it was formerly the rule that

1. Canton in the administrative district of Koudougou.

when a woman brought some sagbo to her adopted son, she could not simply hand it to him. Instead, holes were dug in the courtyard of the naba, into which the woman put the sagbo and sauce. Then the young man came to eat the food, and later the woman came back for her bowls.

Finally, it is still forbidden for anyone to play a guitar when a napagha is passing by unless the player is the naba himself or someone called upon to play by the naba. It should be noted that the Moaga prefers the guitar for intimate occasions. Therefore, to play it when a napagha passes by is actually to court her.

The Pogsioure, or the Recruitment of Sogoné and Saman'kamba

Aside from a few special cases limited by custom which we shall presently describe, the naba can never dispose of the daughters of his subjects, either to make them [165] his own wives or to bestow them on someone else, without the permission of the parents.

Pogsioure comes from pog', the diminutive of pagha, "woman," and from siouré, diminutive of sioubo, "to give anticipating a profit."

As a result of family quarrels or even voluntarily, a Moaga "may give away his daughters and those of his brothers and close relatives to the naba." It is obvious that the naba cannot keep all of these girls, so he gives some of them to his brothers, his uncles, his sons, and even to ordinary Mossi who have done him a service.

In the same way -- and this is more frequent -- every sogoné (page) or samand'biga [singular of samand'kamba] (bodyguard or

562
431 groom) who has served his naba satisfactorily receives, at the
643 time he is freed, a young girl who may be nubile, but who may, on the other hand, be just a small child.

In either case, the former servitor is required to call upon the naba from time to time and to take him gifts (cowries or roosters). If the girl is still living with her relatives, in addition to his trifling presents to the naba, the fiancé may make a few presents to his in-laws, although it is not obligatory.

562 Pogsiouré. The first daughter born of a marriage between a
643 Moaga subject (former servitor, son, brother, or uncle of the naba,
644 etc.) and the woman given to him [166] by the naba becomes the
858 "property" of the latter with full rights over her. She is known as "the daughter of the pogsiouré" and is fated to become pogsiouré in her turn.

643 If the first-born is a boy, the naba may bring him to his
644 court as soon as he reaches the age of discretion to make him either
858 a sogoné or a samand'biga, and the child's father cannot make the
357 slightest objection.

This does not imply that under Mossi law the sogoné and samand'kamba must be children of the pogsiouré. As absolute master of all his subjects, the naba can recruit his servitors throughout his domain as he needs them, with no opposition by the Mossi to this recruitment.

644 The fate of the daughters of the pogsiouré. The girls are
858 taken from their relatives as soon as they are old enough to work
562 and are entrusted by the naba to his own wives.

The latter, for all practical purposes, become the adoptive mothers of these children and, as such, see to their food and clothing. This does not prevent the real mother from bringing cowries and clothing to her daughter, and to make sure that the child will be well treated by the napagha (wife of the naba), she sometimes
[431] even brings the latter a gift of kalgo (soumbala) or karite butter (kamé).

When the girls reach puberty, the naba chooses the most at-
[584] tractive for his fiancées, and the [167] others are given to some of his administrators or to his own relatives.

562 593 644 Rights of parents over their daughters. Although, as has already been noted, the parents retain the right to help their daughters in small ways, they may not, under any circumstances or pretext, break off their engagement nor prevent their marriage. Still less can they promise the daughter to a third party or expect any sort of gifts from the naba.

Later on, in the event that there is agreement between the parties, the husbands may give trifling presents to their in-laws, but there is neither obligation nor coercion to do so.

562 858 Exceptions. Girls given to the marabouts by the naba are considered a kind of alms (saraka), and any children born of such unions belong to the true fathers and may not be disposed of by the chief.

644 357 858 Disposition of boys. Boys recruited as sogoné or samand'kamba are required to serve the naba faithfully, but they continue to belong to their real relatives from whom they annually receive cowries and particularly the fougoibga (blanket).

644 357 661 Although the sogoné are regularly fed and clothed by the naba -- because [168] a naba must always be surrounded by many pages -- this is not done for the samand'kamba. In many cantons and especially in Ouagadougou at the emperor's court, they receive only a meager pittance every two, three, four, or seven days since their role as "vagabond" or groom is supposed to provide them with ample opportunities to rob or rather to pillage the natives. During the winter the grooms and other samand'kamba go out into fields of maize and millet at night or in the morning, and there is general looting. As for any fowl lingering in the karaga (fields of millet near the huts), they are killed and hidden in the bundles of hay used to feed the horses. There are exceptions to this rule: some ministers of the emperor and canton chiefs give their samand'kamba at least one meal per day -- at night -- and during the winter, because they are doing field work, they are given cooked beans or sagbo (millet cakes) at noon.

644 357 608 In general way, however, it may be said that this type of servitor is not supported by the naba. Like the sogoné, the samand'biga chooses a mother at the court of the naba. He helps her cultivate her plot and performs other small services for her (weaving her clothes,

[171] Chapter 11

Marriage, Birth, and Death

Marriage

000 In this chapter we shall review all aspects of marriage throughout Mossi country. The customs are the same everywhere, ranging from the marriage of girls reared in the household of the naba to the institution of concubinage. We shall first deal with the most common forms of marriage, then discuss the matter of bride price, and finally conclude with a discussion of the social status of the Moaga woman.

582 Girls are married between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. With certain rare exceptions, a girl of sixteen or eighteen is never sent to her husband. Such an age is considered very unfavorable [843] for child-bearing, and it is even thought that children whose mothers are too young will not survive.

Young men marry between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.

[172]

562 584 Marriage of a girl reared in the household of a naba. Girls born of the marriage of a woman given to a former servitor by either province or canton chiefs became by right the property of the latter. These girls are taken from their parents when they are old enough to do some work and are entrusted by the naba to his wives. They are henceforth regarded as betrothed to the naba and are obliged to submit to all of the conditions of servitude which are imposed on the other wives.

When they reach marriageable age, they may be given, without either their own or their parents' consent, to freed servitors or to any individual who may have rendered some service to the naba.

This is the first type of forced marriage.

Marriage of a girl given by her parents. Since the girl is regarded as simply a "thing," a being without volition, she may be promised at birth. Very often gratitude for hospitality or the existence of an old debt is sufficient reason for promising a daughter.

562 When the girl reaches marriageable age, she usually finds herself
584 with a husband who is sometimes older than her father and whom she cannot possibly love. She must go to him, however, since such is her father's will.

[431 [173] The fiancé brings some gifts (cowries, chickens, millet
585] beer) and claims his wife. The girl is sent off to her husband's home with no ceremony being performed.

This second type of forced marriage has the parents' consent.

587 Marriage by inheritance. When the head of a household dies, the
428 women, who are considered a part of his estate, are divided up just as is the rest of the property. They are apportioned to the sons of
562 the deceased, or his brothers if the sons are not of marriageable age.
768 However, unlike the procedure for a chief's estate, in which the wife is just a "thing," these wives may choose their husbands from among the members of the family.

This is semi-free marriage.

587 Besides the type of marriage which we shall later call "free marriage" -- a form which occurs very frequently since it includes the marriages of loose women who may have as many as nine husbands, only stopping at the last one because of old age -- there is also remarriage due to successive widowhoods. Some women are so
[177] unlucky as to lose [174] a succession of husbands. They are finally avoided like the plague since they have the reputation of being cursed by the gods (Mossi, kombwinga; Bambara, térédiougou).

584 Marriage after a conventional proposal. When a young man wishes to ask for the hand of a young girl who is not yet engaged, he chooses as his go-between a person who is on good terms with the elders of the girl's village. If the response is favorable, the young man brings a chicken, a secco (dagnopinri) [coarse matting] to close the doorway, and some fagots. He goes back to his village and returns at intervals bearing sprouted millet or millet beer and a chicken for the head of the family. The latter at last tells the go-between: "Tell X... that we accept him as our son and that we shall try to give him satisfaction as soon as possible."

Some time later the young man returns once more with a chicken, sprouted millet, or beer for the elders of the village. He makes

Social Status of the Moaga Woman and Work Assigned to Her

562 The Moaga woman is regarded as a veritable beast of burden. Household duties and the weaving of cotton for her own and her husband's clothes are not her only occupations. [183] She helps her husband cultivate the family field, and she has her own plots for peanuts, beans, etc.

She endures wretched treatment and must always submit to her husband's whims. She enjoys no consideration whatever and is never called upon to give an opinion. The husband alone rules the home.

842 If she is so unfortunate as to have no children, she is regarded with scorn. She carries the loads when a move is in progress. A 482 basket and a pyramid of gourds containing her effects and those of her husband are balanced on her head, while the husband canters beside her on a horse or takes his ease on a donkey. If he is afoot, he carries only his quiver, his arrows, his bow, and a club.

To be sure, the Moaga woman may express in unpleasant words her resentment of the maltreatment to which she is subjected, because the Mossi admit that she has no weapon other than her tongue. This is what is meant by the saying, "A woman's mouth is her quiver."

Conjugal Life

834 Interdictions and permissible acts. The couple is forbidden to have sexual relations at the following times.

834 1. For a period of not less than two years and a half after the 853 birth of a child to safeguard the baby's life. Indeed, it is believed that each child comes into the world with its own supply of milk, and if another child were to be conceived during the nursing period, [184] the first would die because the milk of the newborn child would be fatal to him.

834 2. During the menstrual period. The reason for this prohibition 841 that the husband's fetishes and charms lose part of their "power" after relations at this time.

834 3. A pregnant woman visits her husband during the first six or seven months. All relations then cease until some time after the 843 delivery, as indicated above.

423 will, and the new occupant cannot make the slightest protest.

It should be pointed out, however, that since land is most often abandoned because it was thought to be unproductive or haunted, there is rarely a claim to it by a former owner. In any event the matter is settled by the interested parties. The local administration and the canton chief rarely intervene in such cases.

Owners' rights over fruit trees in cultivated fields. Donsé 423 or néré [locust bean] trees whose fruits contain a yellowish, sweet 263 powder that is edible and [244] whose seeds are used to make soumbala, a fetid condiment much prized by the natives, remain the exclusive property of the former occupant. On the other hand, the tamsé (karite tree) belong to the new owner.

423 This is because the karite tree is found almost everywhere in the bush, while the néré is less common.

Rights of the chiefs over cultivated land. As a general rule, 425 since the principle of right by possession is honored among the 423 Mossi, a canton chief will not confiscate without reason cultivated land belonging to one of his subjects if the land has always been occupied by the occupant's grandparents.

When the land is unoccupied, however, or newly occupied, the canton chief may, by virtue of his absolute authority over his territory, take possession, and the new owner may not claim any compensation.

Field Work

241 In principle, a family field is held in common. When a woman 562 grows old, however, she no longer does field work with her hus- 595 band. She has her own field and feeds herself as best she may, since her husband pays no further attention to her and no longer supports her. The work is done by the family as a group, and the size of the field varies with the size of the family.

241 Early in the morning, usually before [245] sunrise, the head 512 of the family wakens the young people. They go out to the field, which may be five to ten kilometers away. Around ten o'clock, the women bring the remains of last night's sagbo or, lacking that, some millet flour which is taken in water.

428 2. Not to be disqualified for the following causes.

a. Murder of the deceased.

b. Failure to avenge his death. In the old days the son had to avenge his father's death before inheriting his property. At present the term "vengeance" should be understood to mean that he must seek satisfaction for the crime in the courts.

c. Failure to celebrate the funeral.

If the legitimate heir is a minor, his guardian must carry out the ceremony in the child's name.

d. Existence of a will whereby the deceased disinherits the heir presumptive.

Order of succession. As a general rule, property is handed down in the direct line, that is, to the eldest son of the deceased. It is handed down in a collateral line only if there is no son. In the case of certain items, however, for example, the family fetish, the heir is the eldest brother of the deceased.

If there is no heir of the first or second degree, the estate goes to the closest relative of the person from whom the deceased inherited the property.

428 431 The eldest in the family excludes the others and has sole possession of the property. Custom demands, however, that he hand over to his brothers and uncles a part [258] of the property. Nevertheless, this is a free gift which he is not actually forced to make.

428 562 184 In the case of the estate of a naba, the eldest son alone usually inherits all the property left by the deceased because of the heavy expenses he must meet to follow custom when he becomes a candidate for the chiefdom. As far as the women are concerned -- they are a part of the property -- he selects the ones he likes, and the rest are left for the nabissi (sons and descendants of naba).

The same is not true for ordinary Mossi, who have begun to realize that there are advantages in allowing all of the children of the deceased to share in the estate. In the chapter dealing with "Marriage" we have already seen that women were allowed some choice of a husband among the sons of the deceased.

428 In any case, however, the eldest son retains the largest share of the estate, and this is easily understandable in view of the

428 custom which decrees that he likewise inherits all of his father's responsibilities as head of the family.

Do daughters and wives share in an estate? Daughters have
428 no share in an estate although their brothers may give them
562 trifling gifts.

Wives never inherit from their husbands. They can only benefit indirectly as the representatives of their young sons. On the contrary, since the wife is considered a piece of property, [259] she is actually a part of the estate to the same extent as the rest of the property left by the deceased.

428 Disposition of an unclaimed estate. Only the canton chief is qualified to inherit the property of a deceased person having no known relatives.

Rights and Obligations Governing Property in the Family

421 Property is owned individually. Individual property is strictly a private matter. The head of the family has no rights over property acquired individually by the women and children or by other relatives under his rule. They may dispose of their possessions as they see fit. A mother may do some trading to provide savings for her children. The head of the family may not use such property under any circumstances without the consent of the true owner.

428 Does a husband inherit from his wife? A husband has no right
593 to his wife's property. He cannot even claim it if she dies childless, since in that case it goes to her own relatives (brothers or sisters) or, failing that, to their children.

428 Aside from their rights in their father's estate, children inherit their mother's property.

When the head of a family borrows cowries from [260] a
[426] member of his compound, he must repay the loan with a given time. His own property is inalienably his as long as he lives, and then it makes up his estate, along with his wives.

768 Disposition of a house after death. When the head of a com-
428 pound dies, the establishment is not destroyed. It automatically passes to the heirs, that is, to his sons or, if he has no legitimate

643 of his successor. He presides over the election and proclaims the new-
645 ly elected chief. The Larale is the guardian of the Moro Naba's ancestral tombs, and the Ballum is the head of the pages and dancers. When the Moro Naba gives one of his pages in marriage, the latter settles near the huts of the Ballum Naba. This is the least important minister; prior to the French occupation, he was given no province to rule.

631 The Moro Naba ruled directly over a large part of the Mossi territories. The part under his immediate jurisdiction was apportioned among his four principal ministers, who each had under him the heads of the cantons. Those territories not directly subject to the Moro Naba were placed under the authority of powerful chiefs who might be called province chiefs, assuredly vassals of the Moro Naba, but very independent vassals, somewhat similar to the dukes of Brittany and Burgundy vis-à-vis the King of France. Such are the nabas of Ouahigouya, Yako, Boussouma, Bélousa, etc.; there are many of them outside the territory reserved to the Moro Naba, especially to the north, east, and south. These province chiefs could also have independent vassals who, nevertheless, acknowledged their authority, such as the naba of Koupéla, a true province chief, but a vassal of the naba of Bélousa, in turn a vassal of the Moro Naba. The naba of Salmatenga stands in the same position with reference to the naba of Boussouma.

Each province is divided into cantons, each headed by a naba, and the canton includes several villages, each of which usually has its naba. Some of the villages are directly controlled by the province chief who apportions them among his ministers. Some villages may not even have a true naba. These are usually villages established by the children of an important naba. In this case an old man is entrusted with the administrative functions. These villages without a naba may nevertheless obtain one. For example, if the province chief has a son who settles in the community and the inhabitants are pleased with his presence, his father may name him naba of the
562 village. A very few villages are ruled by women who are assisted by the elders when a case is to be judged.

The power of each chief is tempered by his council. The Moro Naba himself does not act without consulting his ministers. Each province /17/ chief has a council. The titles of the ministers vary from one province to another, but their functions are the same.

177 The preceding pages deal wholly with past history. The French occupation has profoundly modified the whole administrative set-up and curtailed the rights of nabas, who are now mere civil servants. The people are slowly learning not to fear them; their authority is weakening; the gifts dwindle; and the nabas have been put on short allowance and forced to cultivate their fields like everybody else. Their judicial power is practically gone, and those few who have preserved real authority were able to do so because of their remoteness from administrative centers and their past. They were in charge before the French occupation, and they have managed to keep up their prestige in spite of everything. Yet little by little attitudes 000 change and respect vanishes. Is this good? Is it bad? The matter could be argued at great length. Although this administrative system led to regrettable abuses which had to be checked, it also had its favorable aspects, and it made the Mossi into one of the most feared and most homogeneous peoples in the bend of the Niger.

/28/ BOOK II. FAMILY LIFE

Chapter 1. Establishment of the Family Through Marriage

562 The family is established through marriage. We shall, therefore, 584 first study the marriage bond. Obviously, since Christianity was 567 introduced in the country only a short time ago, virginity is unknown there even as a concept. Every nubile girl must marry. She is given in marriage by the person to whom she belongs, and her own tastes are not taken into account. She belongs primarily to her father, but sometimes even before her birth she belongs to the person who gave her mother away on the condition — a common clause in free marriage contracts — that the first girl she bears will be given in marriage by her grandfather. Or the woman may belong to her father's master, and this may be her father's only remaining obligation toward the man who formerly owned him as a slave. Thus, nearly all girls born in Koupéla belong by right to the naba, for the inhabitants of this locality were formerly his slaves. Sometimes a

562 girl is used to pay debts; a man borrows on the promise of giving his
584 daughter in marriage. She will be handed over, often with no bride
567 price other than the borrowed sum; and, contrary to the custom noted above, since she is considered a slave, her first daughter does not belong to the grandfather. A girl may also be given in exchange for her enslaved brother or uncle, who thus recovers his freedom. A man may be seriously ill and call a doctor who agrees to treat him on the condition that the patient's daughter be given to him if he gets well. The father does recover, and the girl is given in marriage to the fortunate doctor. Exchange of daughters also takes place: a native may give his daughter in marriage to another, who in turn gives him his own.

562 A girl is given in marriage by her mother only if she was born out
584 of wedlock, and her father is thus theoretically unknown. The sisters
848 of certain nabas are the only ones permitted to choose their husbands
[554] according to their own wishes and to leave them when they please.
593 The fickle existence they lead is easy to imagine! In all other cases the girl is given in marriage by her father, or by his heir if the father is dead. (1) The mother is not consulted, but since she cares for the

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1. It would be onerous and indeed impossible to list all the various situations that may arise. The sorcerers quite often interfere, and who knows what goes through a sorcerer's mind! One case among many: a woman bore a daughter after raising several others who died immediately following marriage; the father consulted the sorcerer to find out whether he should promise this last daughter in marriage. The sorcerer stated that she must be left free to choose her own husband, or else she would die like her sisters. The father left her free.

daughter until the latter marries, she may through advice, promises, or even threats dissuade her from a certain match /29/ or welcome her if she runs away from a husband to whom she was given against her will.

584 If the girl absolutely refuses to go to her betrothed, her father
[582] tries to persuade her but does not use force. If the girl persists in her refusal in spite of everything — this is extremely rare — the father returns to the betrothed any money he may have borrowed, but he does not return anything that was given him spontaneously. If the father happens to die after he has pledged his daughter, his heir may not retract the promise and give his sister or niece to another man,
[428] but he will from then on receive the gifts himself. If the betrothed man dies, his heir gets the girl promised to the father, with the condition that he will continue to pay the bride price.

584 Contrary to the situation in European countries, the woman, con-
583 sidered as valuable property, is paid for; it is not she who brings a dowry, but the man who wants her as his wife. If a man has an eye on a friend's daughter, he goes to visit the father even though the girl may still be a babe in arms. He is careful not to state what he has in mind. He comes sometimes with a few cowries, sometimes with a chicken, a piece of salt, perhaps even a sheep. The child's father understands, and when he has some work to be done, a field to be weeded, millet to be threshed, huts to be roofed, he makes it known to the suitor, who hastens to work for the man whose son-in-law he should like to become.

After a time, the father says to the suitor: "You have treated me well. I am pleased with you. I will treat you well." The suitor understands and becomes even more assiduous. He sends his friends; and on every festive occasion he presents the father of his intended with a few chickens. There is no outright promise, no betrothal in the usual sense of the term. Sometimes the father has financial difficulties, pressing debts, or he has seen a fine garment he should like to buy, and he has a request for money conveyed to his friend. The latter knows that he is loaning without return, or rather loaning against the girl. He refuses only if he is actually unable to furnish the sum; for if negotiations were ever to be broken, the child's father would have to return the money advanced, and this would greatly embarrass him and thus prevent him from profiting through the transaction. In any case, it is extremely rare for a promised girl not to be given to the man who has made the first advances and who has been favorably received. A father who should promise his daughter to a man after receiving gifts for some time from another would be held in very poor esteem and forced to return any money he might

782 a hut for one's wife. Sacrifices are made for every purpose, for everybody, and practically to everything.

Sacrifices are made everywhere. The sacred grove is the place most frequently chosen, along with the dwelling-stone of the kikiriga who protects the house. Sacrifices may be made, however, in the fields, in open spaces where nothing grows, or on the path which leads to the tangandé either from the village where one lives or from one's village of origin, if it is learned that the spirit requires a sacrifice and one cannot go there in person.

Any man may offer a sacrifice once he has reached the age of reason, and children of about ten are sometimes seen offering their sacrifices with as much solemnity as their elders. Women cannot [82] themselves make sacrifices; they must resort to the agency of men. They may, however, furnish the victim and partake of it when it is eaten. Nabas and men of some wealth have their own appointed sacrificer or sacrificers. This is compulsory for province chiefs, who themselves never sacrifice in public ceremonies and quite rarely in private.

There are several kinds of sacrifices, and we shall study each one of them in turn, the better to understand how the Mossi communicate with the invisible world.

First, the characteristic sacrifice which serves as basis to all the others, the mand'zallé.

The sacrificer, accompanied by his son bearing a white or otherwise colored rooster and a gourd containing millet flour mixed with water, proceeds to the place of the sacrifice, for example, to the tangandé.

Upon arriving he says:

782 Kabré, kabré. Excuse me, pardon me.

539 /91/ Then he sits down, his face turned to the west, and taking the victim in his hands, he says:

Na-Wend'daogo, sak'a tan!	God-king male, answer thrice!
Na-Wend'poko, sak'a nasé!	God-king female, answer four times!
Na-Wend'ka kou ned'yé, kon ky yé.	If God-king does not kill, we do not die.
Na-Wendé ka léo, ned'kon lu'yé. — Pilimpik'dim n'yélé; lila kom'dim n'yélé t'eb y noara, ti	If God-king does not bind, we are not bound. — The butterflies have told us; the spirits of the water have told us to take a

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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the ancestral spirits, he is the principal political and religious authority within his lineage.

The single term *boodoo* is used to refer to three separate groups: the sib, the lineage, and the local residential kin group described above. Aside from formalized recognition of patrilineal descent and inheritance, the lineage functions most significantly as a local residential kin group in which the economic and social participation of the female non-members is as important as that of the men. Although the men are most prominent in the direction of its affairs, their wives have a considerable, if somewhat indirect, effect upon decisions made. Even in the relationship of the members of the lineage to their ancestral spirits (*kiemse*), the women play an important part in preparing the food and the libations to be offered. They give birth to the members of the lineage, nourish them until weaning (usually at the age of two), and provide them with guidance and training for their ascribed roles. In the education of the female members of the lineage the wives play a more important part than the men. But it is in their economic activities that the significance of the women's role is best seen. In addition to their farm work, they co-operate fully in repairing roofs, flooring the courtyards, and even assisting in the brick-making which precedes house-building. The economic and social contribution of the wives is of equal importance with that of the husbands and sons, and it is more important than that of the daughters, since females born into the lineage marry and leave just as they become fully productive members of their fathers' households.

Daughters, however, serve their lineage in a different way. As they are successful in winning for themselves a good name in the households of their husbands, so the bond of economic and social co-operation established between the two lineages at the time of marriage is strengthened. When they mature, they return to assist the members of their lineage with ritual obligations to the ancestors. If they are left childless at their husband's death, they may return to their father's household to reside.

Separated from one another by millet fields and the public way, the dwelling of each Mossi kin group has the appearance of a small walled village. Each round mud house with its thatched roof has a separate courtyard which is usually contiguous to the courtyards of the other houses in the residential unit of which it is a part. The individual dwellings are constructed in such a way—the wall of each house or courtyard being contiguous to that of the nearest neighbor—as to form a circular wall whose exterior is closed at all but two points. The dwelling of each kin group has a small exit and a large open entrance way just within which is located a thatch-covered sun shelter (*zande*) where the men of the lineage gather to rest, to work at small crafts, and to talk. Guests are

592 only one or two meters apart, close together. It is true that there
361 is sometimes a small plot within the séko....
171 The soukala or compound is called iri in Mossi, the hut rogo or dogo, and the soukala head irisoba (from soba, "chief" and iri, "compound").

462 We shall close this analysis of the Mossi family with a few notes
562 on the status of women and that of slaves.

First of all, Mossi women help with the tilling. They do not clear the fields, it is true, but they participate in all other field tasks along with the men. They do this only in the morning, however, since they spend the afternoon on household tasks or on their little individual plots, for they have small fields of large white millet, underground peas, beans, or peanuts.

They also do household tasks: they pound and crush the grain. Large millet or sorghum is, as we know, pounded first and then crushed, while small millet is crushed after being threshed.

462 The Mossi set their crushing stones in huge round clay /banco/
252 tables which are built outside the soukala and which are used by
412 the whole quarter. This is a strictly Mossi characteristic which is not found among the /558/ Bobo, Gourounsi, etc., in short, among any of the other groups who nevertheless use the same stones. Those large round tables are not high. They are about 1 or 1.20 meters in height and approximately 6 meters in diameter, with a correspondingly large circumference. The Mossi set in their crushing stones all around the circumference, and each table can thus hold ten, twelve, or even more. Every evening at nightfall the women of the soukala which are around it, women, young girls, etc., come together to crush their grain. They are usually in the simplest of garb, bare as the back of my hand, for the work is hard and demands a continuous back-and-forth motion of the arms, the upper part of the body, and the body as a whole.

To make those tables, they first build a circular wall to the desired height of the table, and then the whole inner space is filled up with earth almost to the top. This earth is pounded thoroughly, and then well-tamped casings are fashioned on the horizontal circumference in which are set the stones on which the crushing is done. The stones are firmly ensheathed in the clay, which is then allowed to dry.

462 Beside cooking tasks, Mossi women have cleaning tasks. They
356 sweep the huts and soukala with handfuls of straw, small primitive brooms 30 or 40 centimeters long. They wash and bleach clothes and make soap. Finally, it is the women who spin cotton and tamp the floor of the huts.

356 This tamping is done as follows. "The natives spread on the surface to be tamped a layer, 10 centimeters thick, of a special black earth that consists chiefly /561/ of ashes and humus resulting from the decomposition of plants and household refuse.

"Above this, the Mossi spread a second layer consisting of clayey ferruginous gravel, from 3 to 5 centimeters thick. The small pebbles are subsequently reduced by heavy tamping to very fine material. Then, the natives spread a little water over this material and tamp again. Once this is done, they allow the floor to dry.

"This procedure is repeated several times, but ordinary water is replaced with néré water (the latter resulting from the infusion in hot water of the fragments of néré fruit, dondo in Mossi) or water into which cow dung has been mixed. When the last tamping and the last drying have been completed, the natives pour néré water in large quantities onto the new floor.

"Finally, the last procedure consists of polishing the surface with flat stones." (Cahier des rapports of the Ouagadougou circle).

593 The duties of Mossi women toward their husband are as follows:
833 1. The fulfillment of the conjugal duty.
562 "The wife," says Moulins, "must never shirk her conjugal duty except when she is pregnant or nursing.

"Should a woman evade her husband from newlywed shyness or for any other reason, he would use at first all means of persuasion within his command, and especially beg the wife's relatives to have a word with her. Should their exhortations prove vain, coercion would be used by beating the woman or putting her in irons. Finally, should those means fail to bring the wife to compliance, she could be turned out by her husband."

593 2. Faithfulness.
562 "The wife must live with her husband. If she abandons the conjugal domicile, her spouse has the absolute right to force her to return. /562/ If she takes refuge with her relatives, the latter must

not shelter her but must on the contrary return her to her husband. If difficulties arise, the husband appeals to the naba, who forces the wife to return to her husband, at whose hands she will get a beating when she arrives....

"...The powers of a deceived husband over his wife's lover were quite fearsome prior to our occupation. He could, at will, either deal with the culprit himself or defer his complaint to the naba. If he dealt himself with his rival and killed him, he handed out the adulterous woman to the Moro Naba and did not have to answer for his crime. If he merely wounded the man, no matter how seriously, he was regarded as having acted in the fullness of his rights as an injured husband, and he kept the wife and gave her a beating. If he appealed to the naba, the guilty pair were punished by being put in irons for a variable period of time. Furthermore, if the adultery had been committed with the wife of a dapouy naba of the Moro Naba (that is to say, a man to whom the Moro Naba had himself given some girl in marriage), the accomplice was compelled to pay the deceived husband a fine of 100,000 cowries.

"Finally, in case of adultery with a chief's wife, both culprits were put to death."

On this subject I find in my notes that prior to our occupation, when a naba was deceived by one of his wives, he killed her with poison and ordered the wife's lover to commit suicide. The latter did this by plunging the head of a poisoned arrow into the calf of his leg.

"It is plain," the author of the Monographie goes on to say, "that the lover was dealt with in the most rigorous manner of all. He could be put to death by the deceived husband in every case, while the wives of a chief were alone liable to supreme punishment. The lover could also be punished with a fine, in a single case anticipated by custom. Finally, he was invariably put in irons on the naba's orders if the deceived husband placed a complaint against him.

"As for the adulterous wife, except when she was /563/ handed over to the Moro Naba by her husband as reparation for the murder of her partner, punishment for her misdemeanor amounted merely to a more or less rigorous beating or to irons for a short period of time. She could, it is true, be turned out by her husband, but the latter

584 bearing dolo /millet beer/; they will serve as witnesses. In their presence, the head of the family mentions by name to the suitor the girl he is granting to him and who will be delivered to him as a wife later when she is old enough to take a husband.

"Then the betrothed man with the friends he brought goes to visit every soukala head in the village, greets them in accordance with Mossi custom, and announces to them that such-and-such a family head has promised him a young girl in marriage. The whole village is thus made witnesses."

Persons whose consent is required to validate a promise of marriage.

● [562] —"The consent of the young girl," says Vadier, "is by no means required. In fact, she is disposed of without being consulted, and she is always forced to become the wife of the man to whom she has been promised, except if her future husband is a leper or blind. The /236/ young girl is actually supposed to be unacquainted with the name of her prospective husband until she is taken to him.

"To validate the marriage, the following people must express their consent.

"1. The future husband. His consent follows from the transactions undertaken by his father or by himself with the family of his future wife.

"2. The girl's father. When a Mossi has one or several daughters and when he thinks the moment has come for the head of the family to dispose of them, he tells the latter that he can promise them in marriage. In spite of his powers, the head of the family could not betroth a young girl unless her father had told him that he could give her in marriage.

"When he has chosen a husband, he goes to see the father of the girl and makes known to him the offer he has received. The father can accept or refuse as he sees fit. His consent is absolutely indispensable, and the head of the family cannot ignore it.

"The father cannot dispose of his daughter without the consent of the family head, except in circumstances we shall examine later.

584 596 "3. The head of the family. The consent of the head of the family is inevitably required, since it is he alone who has the power to promise the young girls of his family in marriage under the terms described above. Three cases where the consent of the family head is not indispensable are as follows: (1) when the father of the young girl is at odds with the head of the family, the father alone may dispose of his

593 The wife must obey her husband. The latter has the right to strike
562 her in case of disobedience, adultery, etc. He cannot break one of her limbs, or kill her.

595 Polygamy. —Polygamy is the general rule, at least theoretically. That is to say, the Mossi may have as many spouses as he wishes as long as he can minister to their needs.

595 In actual fact, only rich people have several wives. The majority
589 are monogamous by necessity, and there are even bachelors. As a passing remark, this applies to the Sudanese Negroes in general, for everywhere nature creates approximately as many men as women, and it is hard to visualize how in any one region each man could have several wives. However, in spite of the occurrence of bachelors and a large number of truly monogamous people, the question still stands. It is solved if we bear in mind that girls are married much earlier than men. This results in a much larger number of women than men "in active-service," if I may be permitted to say so. Undoubtedly, this (along with the occurrence of bachelors and a considerable number of monogamists), takes care of the objection which naturally arises when we speak of polygamy. /243/

163 It may be, let us add, that the number of girls born here is a little higher than that of boys, as has been noted in England, for example.

595 By way of figures on polygamy, let us state that the Moro Naba
643 Bango, the last one who reigned before the arrival of the French, had
645 about 80 wives. The Naba Koboga, who ruled from 1902 to 1914, had 30 or 40. The present Rassam Naba, one of the ministers of the Moro Naba, has 30 or 35 wives. These are, of course, exceptional figures if the total population of Yatenga is taken into account. In any case, the rich men, notables, and men in easy circumstances always have several wives.

595 Organization of the polygamous household. —"The first wife," says Vadier, "enjoys a certain authority over the others. It is she who transmits her husband's orders to the other wives and who notifies him of their wants, who supervises the preparation of meals and apportions the food. In addition, it is she who comes and tells the
[844] husband that such-and-such a wife is no longer in a state of zim and can now fulfill her conjugal duties.

"Aside from this special prerogative enjoyed by the first wife, all wives have the same rights and duties. In principle, each wife must share in turn her husband's bed. Nevertheless, he is free to summon his favorite wife during the day."

803 The conjugal duty. —The wife owes her husband the fulfillment of the conjugal duty.

The wife must never evade it except when she is unwell, pregnant, or when she is nursing. We can see, therefore, that among the Mossi in particular and among the Sudanese in general (for the same customs prevail in this area among all Sudanese Negroes) there is great tact-
[853] fulness. One appreciates this all the more if one bears in mind that here the women suckle their children for two or three years.

"If," says Vadier, "a woman should evade her husband from newly-wed shyness or from any other motive, he would first use all the means of persuasion at his command and, especially, beg the wife's relatives to speak to her. Should their exhortations prove vain, constraint
[573] would be used by giving the wife a beating or putting her in irons. Finally, should these measures fail to bring the spouse to compliance,
[586] she could be turned out by her husband.

"In return, the husband owes the wife the same conjugal duty which he has the right to demand from her.

"Should the husband fail to fulfill it because of impotence, sickness, or simply from ill will, the neglected wife would mention the matter to the family head's first wife, who would in turn notify him.

833 "Should the husband's behavior be caused by physical incapacity,
586 the wife would be taken from him and given to one of his brothers or, if there were none, to his closest male relative, but never to one of his sons. Should it be due merely to ill-feeling, a protest would be made, and should this fail to have any effect after several days, the wife would be allowed to return to her family." /245/

Let us state immediately that these contingencies almost never arise or are so rare as to be practically nonexistent. Custom anticipates them, however, and we have just described what happens when perchance they do arise.

562 Women's property. —Women may own individual property, as we
422 already know, goods which are not shared communally and which belong wholly to them. These goods come from various sources, sometimes the women's small plots of land, sometimes a surplus from the grain they are given to prepare food and which, once made into dolo, is sold for cowries. Sometimes also, the husband's munificence provides them with bracelets and other jewelry. Once given, this jewelry is wholly theirs, and it is added to the trinkets they procure with their own resources.

562 When she dies, a woman's property goes to her children. The
428 objects used by women go to the daughters (bracelets, skirt cloths), while other items (animals, etc.) go to the sons. More exactly, the first-born is favored among the sons and the oldest girl among the daughters. If there are no children, the husband does not take anything, and whatever the wife leaves goes to her family, to her sisters and brothers in the first line of descent. Not having had any children by the deceased, the husband would be ashamed to take what she left.

837 Adultery. —The wife owes faithfulness to her spouse. Unfaithfulness, however, is not very important, for unless it occurs repeatedly it does not usually result in a break. The husband merely beats his wife and scolds her.

837 When the wife has fled to a lover, her husband goes in search of
694 her. The lover will have to provide a sheep (the sheep may be re-
782 placed by a goat), a chicken, and two canari of dolo, all of which
769 are to be sacrificed to the ancestors so they will forgive the woman. She cannot re-enter her house until the sacrifice has been performed; without it the ancestors would kill her. They are unbending, more so than the husband to be sure, about the latter's honor. Should a husband know his wife to be guilty and do nothing about it, the ancestors would be furious and they would kill him, hence the necessity for action on the husband's part.

837 If the husband cannot find his runaway wife, the duty of searching
684 for her and bringing her back to him falls to his father-in-law.

Formerly, before the French occupation, if the lover did not want to return the woman, her father appealed to the naba, that is, the chief of the village or canton, or even to the Moro Naba, who sent horsemen to arrest the guilty pair. He restored the wife to her husband and confiscated for his own benefit the lover's animals and millet granaries.

Nowadays, since the French occupation, one appeals to the commanding officer of the circle and to the native provincial court for the wife's return.

684 Sometimes, in the past, the husband killed his wife's lover when
443 he caught him flagrante delicto. He had the right to do so, but this caused him to lose his /246/ wife who became the property of the Moro Naba. The lover's property likewise reverted to the Moro Naba.

684 In any event, the husband did not have the right to kill his wife
443 except when she was caught flagrante delicto, unless he was the
565

423 also belong to the group, as we shall see later. The group, however,
571 owns neither slaves nor livestock.

421 Household property. —As we know, during the rainy or cultivating
571 season, the husband works two days out of three for his work group.
592 The third day is his. On that day he works in his small field, helped by his wife or wives. During the dry season, the husband does not work for the group but for himself alone, except for repair work on the compound huts.

571 The household is provided with food by the work group seven months
592 out of twelve and is fed with the produce of its own field for five months.

592 The primary possession of the household, therefore, is its private
423 field.

The field belonging to the household of the head of the work group is marked by a special characteristic. Since the head of the group is busy at all times with the communal field, even on the third day, his small plot is cultivated exclusively by his wives (and by his slaves, if he has any). Hence, his food is procured by his wives five months out of twelve. This only applies, however, to the heads of work groups (as well as zaka and family heads who are necessarily heads of work groups also).

423 Individual property. —Mossi women have tiny cultivated patches
562 which are wholly theirs, which do not belong to the work group or to
422 the household and which they work after five o'clock in the evening whenever possible. This is private property. Clothing, women's jewelry, etc., are also individually owned.

The husband and children also own private property. Actually,
423 the better to distinguish between individual and communal property (whether belonging to the household, the work group, the compound, or the family), we shall review below each type of property in turn.

Fields. —The fields belong primarily to the work group. (They belong only exceptionally to the compound, when it is so small that there is only one work group.) In addition to the fields of the work group, there is the household field. Finally, beside the household field, there are the private plots, for example, the little patches of the women and young men.

422 Work implements. —These tools (daba, axes, etc.) belong to the
571 work group. To work their small fields (both household and private), men and women use the daba of their work group, but if they damage

422 591 them, they must repair them at their own expense. Those implements which are worn out are replaced by the head of the work group.

Domestic animals. —Chickens, goats, sheep, donkeys, etc., are 422 231 all fully owned on an individual basis and not by the group or even by the household. The animal is owned by the man or woman who bought /269/ it. Nevertheless, all the goats and sheep in a compound are gathered together, they sleep in the same place, and they are led to the bush in a flock by the little boys of the compound. The animals of the total family or of the village, on the other hand, are never gathered together.

562 Wives. —I need not emphasize that wives are obviously private property. There are no wives owned in common by the village, the family, the compound, or the work group. The wife, however, is in some measure considered to belong to the compound or even to the family in the sense that a man's wives always go to his brother when he dies.

423 592 The compound. —We saw earlier what applies here. The compound belongs to the zakasoba, but only as a representative of the zaka, as a manager of the property of this subfamilial group. It does not belong to him as private property, in the Roman sense of jus utendi et abutendi /right of use and abuse/. It belongs, ultimately, to the zaka itself.

If this is so, it is not less true that those habitable portions of the zaka, the cabins or huts, are definitely allocated to specific households which have rights of usufruct over them. Thus, the ownership belongs to the zaka, as represented by its head. The usufruct belongs to the households or individuals.

Finally, we may note, as we did earlier, that a hut built exclusively by a household with its own labor or by a single individual of the zaka may be torn down and destroyed by him since it is household or private property set up on subfamilial property. This case, however, is quite exceptional.

The large cabins or huts for millet belong to the cultivating groups. There are also huts for millet belonging to the household, where the husband stores the harvest from the household field. Finally, the 422 large earthen vases, the jars which stand in the huts, lead us from the compound to the subject of furniture. These jars are made by the women and belong individually to specific women.

Furniture. —The furniture, which we shall study in greater detail under "Mode of Subsistence" /not translated/, is very scanty and crude. It is owned privately.

428 (whether born of the same father and mother or only of the same father) who benefits, and sometimes the eldest brother among those who were born of the same father and mother, but this sharing is very uneven. The two brothers who are the eldest in the senses just described get considerably more than the other cosharers.

428 571 After the distribution, the men usually remain in the same compound and also in the same work group as before. Upon the death of household heads, however, and especially of heads of work groups, the work groups (which have expanded gradually with new births) alter their constitution and divide. These work groups indeed grow constantly (by the natural process of birth) and also dwindle constantly (by the natural process of death and new divisions). As for the zaka, they are not completely stable either since new ones are established as time goes by in proportion to the growth of population.

428 Let us add a few details on inheritance.

Small male children do inherit, but their share is not handed to them. It is handed to the brother who inherits the mother of these children. When they are grown, their mother's new husband will deliver it to them.

●[562] Daughters do not inherit.

Women never inherit. On the other hand people do inherit from them.

Transmission of specifically private property. —A case of this type is the inheritance of a wife. As we have seen earlier, the goods of a deceased woman go to her children, sons or daughters. Boys' things go to the boys, girls' things to the girls. All the boys get something, but the oldest son is very much favored. All the girls get something, but the oldest daughter is very much favored. When there are no children, the woman's inheritance goes to her own family and not to her husband or to her husband's family. /272/

Another case of this type is the death of a boy or young man. If he has a brother, the latter inherits. If he has no brother, his father does. Sometimes the father entrusts the goods to the mother to be given to a future child.

In the event of a young girl's death, her sister inherits. If she has no sister, the mother inherits. If the mother died first, her family inherits (that is, the mother's younger sister).

Finally, another case in point is the death of a Mossi bachelor. His brother who inherits or, lacking one, his brother's son.

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he received from them. This unequal exchange, plus the nobles' prerogative of seizing the wives of pagans, contributed to the increase of the Moslems.

The conversion of Mossi to Islam is sometimes accompanied by a rupture in the relationships between persons involved in "friendships" with a view of obtaining wives. A great quarrel developed in the district between a pagan chief and a recent convert who refused to give the chief a daughter promised as a wife. The chief became furious and claimed that the Moslem had broken a promise made years ago, but the Moslem claimed that it was against his new religion to give his daughter to a pagan. It is not true that Moslems in the village do not exchange wives with pagans, but the Moslems often try to convert their pagan friends so that the brides will not have to revert to paganism. The chief's difficulty was that he could not become a Moslem because of his ritual and ceremonial relationship with the ancestors. The Moslem men do not have such difficulties with their pagan wives because most women follow their husbands' dictates in religious and other matters. Many Moslem men attempt to prevent their wives from having sacrifices made to the ancestors, but if a woman really wishes such a sacrifice she can easily have it arranged through her pagan relatives. If a woman married to a Moslem refuses to observe Islamic practices, she is liable to divorce and runs the risk of having her children taken away.

Mossi anxiety over children is often instrumental in converting them to Islam. When a woman is barren or her young children die, she consults a soothsayer (*barga*). She is either told that her Tengkougre benefactor was not amply rewarded and recalled the children, or that her "Moslem" children (children who wished to be Moslems) were angry because they were given pagan names. In the latter case she is advised to make a gift to a Moslem and to ask her husband to build a Moslem prayer-circle outside his hut so that when her children "return" (are born again) they will see it. Finally, she is advised to give all her children Moslem names. I could discover no reason why the pagan soothsayers advise these anxious parents to adopt Islam, except that they hope that complicated prescriptions will be more efficacious. Nevertheless, so effective is this technique for gaining converts to Islam that even members of the family of the chief pagan priest are not immune to it. Furthermore, once a woman has a Moslem child, all her other children must be Moslems or they will die. A man whose children are all Moslem has no recourse except to adopt Islam if he wants a funeral, because his Moslem sons may not give him a pagan funeral.

Every Mossi, whether Moslem or non-Moslem, wishes a proper funeral, and now that travel has increased the fact of being Moslem or pagan is of great importance. Many young migrants to Ashanti have reported that their dead pagan comrades were unceremoniously disposed of, while the local Christians and Moslems took care of their dead coreligionists. But despite this fact, and the belief of administrators and missionaries, I found no evidence that the seasonal and other migration of Mossi youth to Ghana and the Ivory Coast have contributed very much to the spread of Islam. It is true that some of the thou-

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794 efficacy of ancestor-veneration and do not "kill chickens" to the ancestors, but
595 they maintain that it is a man's duty to have many wives so that he may have
842 children to succeed him. Furthermore, since Mohammed himself decreed that his followers may keep four wives, provided they treat each with the same degree of kindness, there is no conflict between Islamic tenets and Mossi practice of polygny. The average Moslem has two wives, but even the few men in the district who have more than four wives do not appear overly concerned about [582] transgressing the tenets of their faith. Mossi Moslems have not adopted the paternal parallel cousin marriage so common among other Moslems, and show surprise when told that Islam permits such marriages. However, they have modified their marriage behavior to harmonize with what they consider an Islamic tenet that "a man should not marry the widow of his father." The Moslem Mossi profess to look with horror on these marriages among their pagan brothers, preferring the levirate instead.

794 The Moslems' attitude toward the low status of women in Mossi society has not changed, and in one respect it can even be said that this attitude has
● 562 been strengthened. Many Moslem wives now cover their faces, and many El Hadjis have attempted to place their wives in purdah by preventing them from going to the market for fear they would come in contact with pagan men. The development of this practice is running counter to the growing emancipation of Mossi women, who have just begun to leave their villages for periodic visits to the larger towns. Nevertheless, the important fact is that the Mecca pilgrims have the opportunity to see Moslem women playing roles which are forbidden or unknown to Mossi women. And while it is true that the Mossi pilgrims would not easily adopt and foster monogamy, their receptivity to new Islamic beliefs and customs might have a liberating effect on their treatment of women. Once institutional and cultural changes have been accepted by the El Hadjis, they are likely to spread quite rapidly throughout the society because men who have visited Mecca are believed to have returned filled with wisdom and understanding.

797 Christianity came to the Mossi on January 24, 1900, shortly after French conquest. As noted above, the first missionaries were well treated, but the Mossi balked at the attempts at conversion. Nevertheless, by 1919 the White Fathers of the Catholic missions had established several centers, among which was the district of Manga where this study was conducted. Manga is considered a Catholic district, but there are only 3,000 Catholics out of a population of 124,000—which also includes 9,200 Moslems and five Protestants. [184] Thus, in contrast to Moslem Nobéré, which has no Catholics or Protestants, Manga, like most districts in Mossi territory, has a Moslem community.

The conversion of the Mossi in Manga to Catholicism follows the classical pattern of missionary proselytization in the country. Monsignor Socquet (1956:62) states that the Mossi always react to attempts at conversion with the statement: " 'We are looking at our chief,' that is to say, 'We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is favorable to it, then we will not go against his will.' " Socquet concludes: "It is thus understandable

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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797 555 administration to have one of their converts, a younger son of the late chief, elected to the district chieftainship over his elder brother. This belief is probably unfounded, since the Moro Naba seems to be electing the literate sons of chiefs to their fathers' positions so that educated chiefs, and not educated commoners, can serve as members of French parliamentary bodies. Unfortunately, the people of Manga do not understand modern political problems, and have accepted the new chief only because of their traditional respect for the chieftainship.

634 797 769 [602] The conversion of the Manga chief to Catholicism has not engendered many problems for his pagan subjects. The chief's primary duty—to begin the yearly ceremonial cycle of sacrifices to the ancestors—has been taken over by his father's brother, who is now considered the ritual head of the chiefly lineage. Nevertheless, to the chief still accrue the gains of this ceremony because his followers pay him homage and bring him gifts on his birthday, which comes at this period. Moslems in the community also pay their respects at this time, and they prefer his Catholic birthday celebration to the bloody sacrifices of chickens to the ancestors. On the other hand, the chief shows little of the common Catholic disapproval of Moslems and sends gifts to their leaders on the Moslem feast days. He also entertains the district Moslems when they come to pay him homage.

797 634 582 The Catholic chief does not act as a pivot in the exchange of wives between pagans of his lineage and the other lineages. This task now falls to his father's brothers. Nevertheless, as district chief he is constantly involved with the marital problems involving pagan parents and their Catholic children. The main source of the difficulty is that Catholic girls are encouraged to refuse to join their pagan husbands when so ordered by their parents. The mission not only insists that the girl freely choose her own husband, but encourages her to reject a polygynous union. Catholicism thereby interposes itself between the girls and their society, not only impairing the prestige of their fathers and lineages but also giving the girls more freedom than they would ordinarily possess. [562]

The pagans claim that by encouraging girls to choose mates without parental consent, the Catholics are really taking the opportunity to obtain wives for young Catholic men. Paradoxically, there seems to be some truth in this, since Bouniol, a White Father, states:

> A Mossi who is unable to acquire a wife by [traditional] means must either remain unmarried or seduce another man's wife . . . they must choose between celibacy and immorality.
>
> Such a state of affairs creates many problems for the missions, especially as the system is recognized and sanctioned by the colonial authorities. . . . Young native Christians are obviously placed in a very awkward position. Their conversion angers their parents, who refuse to give them a wife; neither will their friends bestow a daughter upon them, because they know that they will not receive one in return, since a Christian may not give a daughter in marriage to a pagan. . . . *Consequently, unless the missionaries help them to find a wife, they must remain unmarried—a very discouraging prospect!* (1920:160 italics mine)

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
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tradition of hostility. Such groups obviously have both equal and mutually independent status.

The Processes of Mossi Joking

I have already suggested that the significance of joking as an adjustive mechanism is derived from the manner in which it provides concurrently for the operation of three interrelated but analytically separable processes. These are *communication, control,* and *catharsis.*

As a means of communication, joking provides a permissive and flexible context in which a grievance can be expressed, thus allowing for its rectification and the restoration of amity. As a means of control, the public nature of most joking serves to shame the object of the jocular offensive, to invoke social pressure for his conformity, and to elicit support for the complainant. As a means of catharsis, the joking expression of aggressive feelings reduces frustration and thus serves indirectly to perpetuate the amicable aspect of the relationship in which it occurs.

Joking also gives pleasure. The feeling of triumphant release that follows the successful—and safe—expression of hostile sentiments probably functions to reinforce reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism. And the intrinsic pleasure of wit may also explain the persistence of joking behavior in the absence of an immediate "structural need" for it.

A more detailed description of one of the relationships already mentioned—sibling-in-law joking—will serve to illustrate these several points. Because of its relation to the pivotal institution of marriage, sibling-in-law joking is perhaps the most frequently used adjustive mechanism in Mossi social structure. The potential for marital conflict is high. This appears to be due to the combined factors of a sexually differentiated enculturative experience that results in marked dissimilarities in adult male and female personality; to an age difference between husbands and wives of at least ten years; to the classic stresses of polygyny; to the subordinate status of Mossi women, particularly of junior wives within their husband's patriclan; and to the possible dissatisfaction of a woman's parents, particularly her mother, at the loss of their daughter's services or at the inadequacy of bride-wealth payments.

Whatever its origins in a specific instance, it is important that this potential for conflict be controlled, for each marriage extends the network of affinal and cognatic ties that link the patrilineage to the larger community. Given a persistent potential for strife, the preservation of marital stability requires the provision of a means for minimizing its deleterious effects. When conflict occurs, the resultant frustration must be reduced, and accord must be reestablished in a manner that does no serious damage either to the marriage itself or to the larger context of social relations in which it is embedded. Sibling-in-law joking helps to accomplish this.

If, for example, a Mossi is irritated by his wife's performance of some aspect of her duties in the household or the field, he need not address her directly in order to communicate his dissatisfaction and release the tension he feels. To do so in a culture which places a high value on indirection in emo-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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tricem over the woman and turned over the rights *in uxorem* to the man. This point is very important, because, by accepting the woman as a wife for his lineage segment, the Boodkasma accepted the responsibility of giving a woman in return to the other lineage. The stress placed on the lineage in wife-exchange was due to the corporate nature of this kinship group, as well as to the prohibition against a man's exchanging his own sisters or daughters as wives. He had to use other women in the lineage. It was believed that if this rule were violated, the women exchanged would also "exchange lives"—i.e., the fate of one would automatically reflect the fate of the other.

The Mossi marriage system worked to the advantage of both the elder males of the lineage segment and the nobles of the ruling lineage. Since the older men of the various groups controlled the resources of their kinsmen, they usually initiated "friendship" relations and obtained wives for their group. The more impartial elders distributed the women equitably among their fellow kinsmen, but occasionally older men kept the wives for themselves, knowing that in time these wives would be inherited by their younger kinsmen. Younger men had to wait until their elders died, do without wives, or establish "friendly" relations with older men. Some young men and newcomers to the district appealed to the chief for *pughsiudse* (from *pugho*, the diminutive of *pagha*, "woman," and *siubo*, "to give with the hope of profitable return"). These pughsiudse were women whom the chief received from his subjects and whom he subsequently gave out as wives on condition that their husbands give him their eldest daughters as future pughsiudse.[9]

The nobility benefited by the Mossi marriage system because, as a group, they received more women than they gave out in the exchange of wives. Furthermore, this enabled them to make more marriage arrangements. This does not mean that a differential value was placed on women of different status groups. The Mossi tended to regard all women as equally valuable, but commoners tended to be more generous to noble friends than vice versa.

The nobles also received wives from their "brother," the district chief. He received women as presents and signs of fealty and homage from most of the groups in his district, and also from groups outside his district. He kept some of these women as wives; others he used as pughsiudse; and still others he gave to his lineage segments. Some nobles had another method of obtaining wives, namely, by abduction. A nobleman who saw the daughter or wife of a commoner in the market place often encouraged her to desert her father or husband and come to him. Her relatives usually

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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Naba regularly saw his son in private, and that the prince often interceded successfully with his father for the lives of rebels or criminals. 644 593

The Mogho Naba seldom saw his younger sons, who usually remained with their mothers' patrilineages until they were old enough to be assigned district chieftainships or sent to live in villages controlled by the Baloum Naba. He was rather suspicious of these boys, who, if certain traditions are believed, were not averse to plotting the death of the Djiba Naba in order to succeed to the nam. The district chiefs also feared these younger sons, in whose favor they were often deposed by the Mogho Naba. Almost all of the dynastic changes that occurred in the Mossi districts seem to have stemmed from a ruler's attempt to find districts for his brothers or his younger sons. 634

The ruler was less concerned with the welfare of his daughters and female relatives. Their marriages seldom benefited the political system. As a matter of fact, the behavior of a royal princess usually strained the relations between her husband and the ruling lineage. The reason for this was a status conflict: as wives, they had low prestige in Mossi society; but as relatives of the Mogho Naba, they enjoyed high status. This contradiction made it difficult for them to accept the low estate of wives. Consequently, they clashed with their husband and often dominated the women and co-wives in his compound. Since few Mossi men tolerate strife within their household, these noble wives often withdrew from their husband's home and established one of their own. The one exception to this pattern was the ruler's eldest daughter, the Napoko, whose ceremonial duties at his death and during the interregnum compelled her to remain loyal to the husband chosen for her by the king. Like her brother, the Crown Prince, if she violated any of the traditions and thus became ineligible to fulfill her duties to her father and to the state, she endangered the country at its weakest moment, when the government was being transferred from the deceased Mogho Naba to his successor. 643 644 593 [562]

The death of a Mogho Naba was usually attributed to foul play or supernatural forces. When Mogho Naba Sagha II died in 1957, a report from Ouagadougou stated that the Governor of the Upper Volta had felt constrained to have an autopsy performed to quell rumors that the monarch had died of poisoning.[22] The obvious function of such rumors was to dramatize the gravity of the situation during the interregnum. 643 761

Because the Mogho Naba was usually accompanied by a page, it was often this boy who witnessed his death. It was the page's responsibility to notify the Baloum Naba, who notified, in order, the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, the Gounga Naba, the ruler's children, 643 763 [644] [645]

692 or because the litigants had rejected the village chief's verdict). The chief
634 then asked the plaintiff or "the people of X village" to state their case.
695 Someone usually spoke up, and after he had finished, the chief asked the defendant or defendants to do likewise. The litigants were then asked to produce reputable witnesses to support or refute the testimony.

[641] Witnesses had to be male, adult (to have begun to "push a beard"), and
[562] free. Women and bondsmen had no legal personality before a Mossi court.
[567] A slave was represented at court by his master, and a woman by her husband (and, by extension, by his patrilineage). In marital quarrels or property suits, a woman was usually represented by her patrilineage. Only if
[576] she alone could give the required evidence was she allowed in court. When she was asked to testify, she knelt, and spoke in a high, thin, soft voice, thus showing extreme respect to the chief and proper deference to the court. Except for these restrictions, any person could be called in as a witness.
[578] Tempers often ran fairly high among the litigants' relatives and friends while they gave their testimony and argued the case, but their physical separation and their respect for the chief prevented abuse and fighting. Anyone who started a fight in court was liable to a beating by the samandekamba.

[674] The Mossi believed that most people, given sufficient reason, would commit any crime. Thus they examined the litigants carefully and at great length in an attempt to "get behind" the offense. The district chief interrogated the litigants, but the dignity of the court prevented him from arguing with them. As a matter of fact, most of the cross-examination was done by the litigants themselves. From time to time, the village administrator and the chief's confidants asked brief, direct questions. When a woman was involved, the chief's Pughtiema usually listened to the proceedings from behind a wall and questioned her. When all the evidence was in, the chief either rendered his verdict without delay or retired to the zongo to confer with his confidants and the village administrator. He took the latter course whenever he felt that further discussion was necessary or that false testimony was confusing the issue. Not until he felt that he had the facts well in hand did he return to the court to render his verdict.

The Mossi did not use ordeals in court except in the "chastity trials" conducted by the Pwe Naba. Some litigants called upon the ancestors to kill them if they were not telling the truth; others went to earth shrines and drank an infusion of dust to show that they were not afraid of the spirits who wrought vengeance on the guilty. However, such acts were never carried out in court and thus were of no use to the chief.

The following case, tried in a district court in 1956, illustrates the Mossi

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concept of justice. To reach the central market, the people of Donse village used a path that ran across the fields belonging to two of their fellow villagers, Zami and Isa. The path was normally open all year round, even during the planting season, because neither man wished to inconvenience the villagers. But one day the two men quarreled, and shortly thereafter Isa announced his decision to close his path during the planting season. He said he feared that "people would steal his growing crops" if he left it open. Moreover, he wanted to use the path to increase his planting area. Zami objected to what he considered an insult, and, believing that Isa had violated a customary rule, used the path. In doing so, he crushed several stalks of millet. Isa witnessed his action, and the men came to blows. When the village chief proved unable to reconcile them, they were brought before the district court. 634

The district chief ruled that according to Mossi custom, a man could close a path during the planting season to prevent people from stealing his crops. But if he closed a path, he had to provide an alternative route, for no one had the right to restrict the movements of others. The chief sympathized with Isa over the small size of his field, but insisted that he provide a path across or around it. However, he persuaded Zami to let Isa use a portion of his land in compensation for the new path. 695 691 685 634

The chief tried to reconcile the interests of Isa and Zami with those of the entire village. He apparently felt that reconciliation was more useful than judgment. He did uphold the law that the right of passage is mandatory, but also maintained that a man has the right to protect his property from potential thieves. At the same time, he made it clear that although a man may defend his own rights, he may not do so by infringing upon the rights of others.

The same principles seem to have been upheld in the following case, also recorded in 1956, which is interesting because it illustrates the flexibility of Mossi law. A man named Hammadou died, leaving fifteen cows as his legacy. Moussa, his eldest son and principal heir, distributed the cows among his father's other sons and male relatives, but did not give any to his father's daughter. Strictly speaking, he was right to exclude her, because a woman was not supposed to inherit any of her father's property unless he had no living lineal or collateral relatives. In practice, however, a daughter always received part of her father's legacy, especially if he had been wealthy. Hammadou's daughter therefore felt slighted, and when she received no redress from Moussa or her other male relatives, she had the case taken to the village chief. He could not resolve it, and referred it to the district chief. 691 428 [562] [692]

When Moussa was called before the district chief, he explained that his [634]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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were seldom able to follow a case higher than the subdivision level. In cases involving long imprisonment or the death penalty, the relatives of the condemned person usually learned about the sentence through rumors from the capital, but seldom through the administration.

One judicial duty which the administration gave the Mossi chiefs and which they had always disliked was the adjudication of domestic cases. They found such cases even more difficult and distasteful after Hesling issued a circular on "The Condition of the Native Woman," which is summarized in a semi-official report as follows:

> [The Governor] is pained to see [the Mossi woman] so often subjected to a special form of slavery which, notably at the time of marriage, reduces her to the role of a domestic animal. Without wishing to interfere with ingrained native traditions, the Governor desires "to prime the desirable evolution by means of judicial decisions." Thus he comes to the decision that in those lawsuits concerning marriage in which formerly the woman was not consulted, she must henceforth be present and must argue the case with her husband. M. Hesling trusts that this procedural reform, which he hopes will give the native woman "a consciousness of her individuality and her rights," will be followed in the courts by further reforms. First of all [the courts] must weaken and then progressively modify those traditions which promote injustice toward women. . . . Questions will no doubt be raised as to whether it is necessary to set up regulations on such matters. However, M. Hesling advises his administrators to adjust [such regulations] to, and apply them with respect for, ancestral traditions. It will be interesting to see the [illegible] of the Upper Volta will acquire some individuality."

The Mossi chiefs were not told that the Governor's circular recommending a change in the status of women stipulated that traditional practices be taken into account. But even if they had been told, they would not have been impressed, because any fundamental change in the status of women would have placed their whole society in jeopardy. Woman exchange stood at the core of a social, economic, and political nexus that held Mossi society together. True, in pre-conquest times most quarrels and lawsuits were caused by trouble over women, but the marriage system was upheld by all the other institutions. Even after the arrival of the French and the weakening of the chiefs' judicial role, the Mossi could punish violators of the marriage system by imposing social sanctions. They now feared that if the French passed laws giving the women free choice in marriage, and the chiefs had to adjudicate on the basis of these laws, all traditional sanctions would become obsolete. Neither the chiefs nor the Mossi on the Council of Native Notables nor the elders welcomed any discussion about

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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the status of women. They maintained that the French had conquered the Mossi men, not the women, and that the administration should not interfere with the way in which a Moaga treated his wife. Ironically enough, there was little the administration could do for the Mossi women, since the latter were too timid to approach the Europeans. Most of them continued to react to maltreatment from their husbands by running away, but now they went to the Gold Coast with labor migrants instead of returning to their lineage.

Although the Mossi chiefs had little autonomy in the administration of their subjects, and had to look to the administration for guidance in nearly everything they did, they were not completely powerless. They were the representatives of the colonial administration on the local level, and as such they could control their subjects through the differential allocation of prestations. Those Mossi who had maintained the traditional respect for the chiefs could look forward to less arduous tasks for the administration and to the avoidance of forced labor or army recruitment. Those who by their actions or attitude indicated that they had lost respect for the chiefs were penalized accordingly. Chiefs were also able to retain some control over their subjects because they were still the centers of social, economic, and political relations within their territories. They still received homage and presents from their more loyal or traditionalistic subjects, and with these goods and services they could bind other persons to themselves. Some chiefs were able to manipulate the colonial administration and use it to enhance their traditional position so successfully that the administration and the missionaries had to take these men into account whenever they wished to establish contact with the population.

The desire of the missionaries to establish missions and schools for the purpose of converting the Mossi to Christianity presented the chiefs with a great challenge because, unlike the administration, the missionaries tried to establish direct contact with the people. The chiefs not only did not like to have Europeans living in their midst, but feared that they would lose control over their subjects who went to live near the missions. However, the chiefs could not refuse to grant the missionaries land on which to build missions and schools. They also provided labor for them, just as they did for the construction of administrative buildings and roads. Similarly, the chiefs recruited children for the mission schools in the same spirit as they recruited students for the schools of the administration. The difference between the Catholic missionaries and the administration with respect to education was that while the former were interested in educating the children of chiefs, they were also interested in children from other backgrounds. Nevertheless, the majority of chiefs continued to send to school

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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443 shoulder; but when he arrives in the market, he calmly places his
651 weapon on top of one of the sheds before he makes his rounds. The
626 women do not carry any weapons to market except their "words" but
411 even these are not often used because of the desire to avoid hostility—
[578] which the Mossi do not like to have disrupt one of their major institutions.

443 The rural market is the center of Mossi social life, and friends
671 as well as enemies meet within its confines. What Mangin wrote some forty years ago is still true: "Every self-respecting Mossi—man or woman, child or elder—must go to market at least once in a while, were it only to look . . . and to be looked at, if he can put on some
[292] handsome clothes" (Mangin 1921 : 53). Except for the Moslems who
[284] are now experimenting with a form of Purdah, there are few persons who do not go to market. The absence of someone from the market for more than two consecutive occasions is a sure sign of illness, travel, or family crisis. As one man said to me, "I must go to market, and when I get there I look for three persons: my girl friend, my debtor and my enemy. If I do now know whether any of them are at the market I am ill at ease. And when I go to the market and do not see them all, the market is not good."

443 The lively character of the Mossi market will be discussed later,
671 but throughout this kaleidoscope of activities certain consistencies
576 can be discerned. For example, one notices many different kinds of greetings and salutations in the market place, but each one of them correctly indicates the exact relation or relationship between the persons involved. Young girls on passing each other on one of their innumerable circuits of the market bend their knees slightly and place both of their cupped hands on their own breasts. Only then will they stop and exchange news. At the end of the conversation they repeat the same greeting and continue their rounds. Both girls and women greet casual male acquaintances in the same way, but
[572] invariably kneel if the male stops and talks to them. Women some-
[662] time kneel when speaking to each other, but always do so when addressing any male relative of a respected category, who may then send them on errands such as buying tobacco from the vendors. A man who meets a female benefactor, such as a woman who has given medi-
[562] cine to one of his children, invariably kneels down before her. She
[402] may do the same thing out of respect for his male status. However,
[404] when a man meets either his mother-in-law or his father's sister, he is the one to kneel down in order to greet her. Two men who are equals normally shake hands, but if not, the junior in status or in age kneels down before his elder or superior. Sometimes a high status man will prevent his greeter from kneeling by raising him. When